

More than 15,000 wounded, many of whom would go back and fight again for their country if only they could. We have defense contractors bribing Members of this institution. No wonder we are so ill-prepared for another terrorist attack.

This week, the chairman of the September 11 Commission gave this government's response, since that terrible day, five Fs and 12 Ds. The facts more than speak for themselves. Democrats believe that the time has come to restore the values of responsibility and integrity to our way that our government does business.

Mr. Speaker, it starts with putting the needs of families before special interests of the lobbyists. It starts here in this building, and it starts with new leadership.

□ 1015

LISTEN TO THE GOOD NEWS

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, a reporter from a major news organization in the United States who is now stationed in Iraq made the statement the other day that if he wrote a single story that was positive about what was going on in Iraq, he would have to fight with his editor to get it published.

Is it any wonder that we have such a negative attitude in America about the war and the way it is going?

I think it is time for a little reality. During the last week of November, 526 insurgents were detained or killed and 104 weapons caches were discovered during 355 combined operations. And in those operations, 30 percent of them were conducted independently by Iraqi security forces. As of November 16, 2005, a total of 211,700 Iraqi security forces have been trained and equipped. The number includes 99,500 Ministry of Defense forces and 112,200 Ministry of Interior forces. Thirty Iraqi Army battalions have assumed primary control of their own areas; and on and on it goes, Mr. Speaker.

There is a lot of good news out of Iraq, and we ought to begin to listen to it.

YACHTS FOR THE RICH, DEBT FOR THE POOR

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, despite a flood, a sea of red ink, tomorrow Republicans propose to cut taxes. Cut taxes for whom? The wealthy. They want to float the yachts of the wealthy on a sea of red ink.

One of the cuts is for people who get a chip dividend on their stocks and is paid for by dramatically increasing the costs of student loans.

I have met with students at Oregon State and the University of Oregon during the break. These kids are working hard trying to realize the American Dream. Some of them are holding down three jobs and borrowing as much as they can, and the Republicans say they have to pay more for those loans so that rich people can pay a rate of taxes on dividends less than someone who works for \$25,000 a year.

That is an outrageous position for the majority party.

AMERICAN-MADE UNIFORMS NEEDED

(Mr. DUNCAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, last week The Washington Post reported that our U.S. Border Patrol agents are wearing uniforms manufactured in Mexico. One agent said, "It is embarrassing to be protecting the U.S.-Mexico border and be wearing a uniform made in Mexico."

There are plenty of companies all over this country that could make these uniforms, yet some brilliant bureaucrat has decided to give jobs to Mexicans rather than to Americans. I have nothing whatsoever against Mexico, but the first obligation of the U.S. Congress should be to our own people.

Not only is this a jobs issue, but there are security implications as well. Having these uniforms made in another country makes it more likely that these uniforms could end up on a black market and be sold to drug traffickers, illegals wanting to cross the border, or even worse, terrorists trying to come here.

I hope all Federal officials will start trying to give as much business as possible to American companies and workers instead of giving even more jobs to those in other countries.

REPUBLICAN BILLS DO NOT HELP AVERAGE AMERICANS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I listened to my Republican colleague who just spoke, and he talked about how the first job of this Congress is to protect the jobs of the American people. I do not see that happening here.

We are back now for a 2-week period here in the House and what do I hear is on the agenda? First of all, tomorrow is the Tax Reconciliation Act. This is the tax cut, if you will, for special interests, for wealthy people paid for with the budget cuts that we adopted, the Republican leadership adopted 2 weeks ago, cuts in student loans, cuts in Medicaid, cuts in housing, cuts in programs that help the average American. And they are doing that in order to pay for a tax cut they are going to vote on this week by the Republican

leadership that would essentially help only the very wealthy and the special interests, the corporations.

What else is on the agenda today? The Bahrain Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act, another free trade agreement that is going to mean loss of American jobs, outsourcing of American jobs to other countries.

How many more of these are we going to have? How many more times am I going to come down to the floor and have the Republican leadership post bills that do not help the average American?

WORKING WITH INDIA FOR OUR FUTURE

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, Congress will soon consider implementing legislation to support civil nuclear cooperation between India and the United States. I strongly support this initiative, which is a critical component of the U.S.-India Joint Statement of July 18 reached during the historic visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Washington this past summer.

The civil nuclear agreement is a major step forward for the United States and global nonproliferation policies. In the U.S.-India Statement of July 18: "President Bush conveyed his appreciation to the Prime Minister of India's strong commitment to preventing WMD proliferation and stated that as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology, India should acquire the same benefits and advantages of other such states."

After my meetings in New Delhi last week, I am convinced that our strategic partnership with India will help ensure our own future security and prosperity working together for victory in the war on terrorism.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11, our generation's December 7.

FIX MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

(Mr. BISHOP of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, over the past 2 weeks, I hosted five town hall meetings in my district. They were attended by hundreds of seniors who wanted to learn more about the Medicare drug benefit. I found that for as much interest as seniors demonstrated, it is readily apparent there is an equal amount of confusion, frustration, cynicism, and in some cases even anger.

Seniors do not understand why there is such little time to sign up for the benefit or why they will be locked into a plan when the plan does not have to

commit to them. But we should not be surprised by a benefit whose design was the result of ideology trumping practicality.

It is obvious that an enormous portion of the benefit needs fixing and that it will take a tremendous effort to make seniors have access to the affordable lifesaving drugs that they deserve.

Step one should be extending the May 15 sign-up deadline. Step two should be dropping the penalty for late sign-up. Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support such measures.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN SAVES SENIORS MONEY

(Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, Connecticut seniors are signing up for the new Medicare prescription drug benefit, and many are saving hundreds and thousands of dollars.

The CHOICES bus visited the senior citizens center in Plainville, Connecticut, and Thomas and Margaret Bernatchy spoke with a trained counselor. Mrs. Bernatchy takes many drugs, and it costs the couple \$7,000 a year. After discussing their needs with the trained counselor, Mr. Bernatchy signed himself and his wife up, and they will save \$5,000 a year.

Mrs. Anita Willequer who also lives in Plainville was attending exercise classes at the senior center and decided to pop in on the Medicare CHOICES counseling session. She spends only \$55 a month on drugs, but she will save \$500 a year. "This is a tremendous savings," she said. "I was glad I asked about it. I hope it helps a lot of people."

With each passing day, more and more seniors are talking with Medicare-trained advisors, getting their questions answered, signing up for savings. Help your seniors sign up for savings.

TAX RELIEF RECONCILIATION PACKAGE

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, as the Congress begins to finalize this year's legislative agenda and draw this session to a close, I am very pleased to see this House continue to do the people's work right up to the end. I am especially pleased this House will soon vote to allow the American people to keep their money and not raise taxes. Clearly, the opponents of maintaining the tax status quo do not trust the taxpayers with their own money.

Mr. Speaker, let us review some statistics. The economy grew by 4.3 percent in the previous quarter, the 10th consecutive quarter in which the econ-

omy grew by more than 3 percent. Consumer confidence rose by 14 percent in the previous 3 months, and we have a 5 percent unemployment rate which is lower than the average unemployment rate for the past three decades. And to top it off, since May of 2003, 4.4 million jobs have been created.

Mr. Speaker, the results are in, and the American taxpayer has passed with flying colors. So let us keep this growth growing. Let us show that we trust the true engine of this economy, the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to do the right thing and support the tax relief reconciliation package.

THERE IS A VICTORY PLAN

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, President Bush gave an important speech last week in which he clearly outlined a plan for victory in Iraq, organized around three tracks:

Political: isolate the terrorists, engage those outside the process and build stable, pluralistic national institutions that can represent all Iraqis.

Security: clear areas of enemy control, hold those areas with Iraqi forces, and build capacity of local institutions to deliver services and advance the rule of law.

Economic: restore neglected infrastructure, reform stifling Saddam-era regulations, and build government capacity and human capital to reach full economic potential.

Already we have seen progress in each of those areas, yet Democrats continue to argue that President Bush still has not laid out a plan. It is as if they cannot see the forest for the trees. They are so intent on not seeing a plan that when one is placed in front of them, they simply will not acknowledge it.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats need to realize that disagreeing with the plan does not mean there is not one.

EXTEND TAX RELIEF FOR AMERICANS

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, did you see the great economic news? Last month, November, 215,000 new jobs were created. Just another sign that the positive, productive policies of tax relief are working.

In the past 2½ years, 4.4 million new jobs, an unemployment rate of 5 percent, lower than the average for the 70s, the 80s and the 90s.

Look at the economic growth that has occurred over the last 10 quarters, more than 3 percent growth each quarter, 10 straight quarters. Mr. Speaker, this is very good news.

The American people expect us to do the responsible hard work that respects their hard work. I call on all Members of Congress to put aside politics and vote in favor of the extension of tax relief for all Americans and not to raise taxes at this pivotal time.

GALVANIZING A NATION

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, it was a Sunday morning on December 7, 1941, and the planes came down and Pearl Harbor entered the history of infamy in the United States of America. Days later, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt would use that term from this very podium in describing the holocaust of that day. But from the tragedy of Pearl Harbor came a galvanized Nation that rose as one man to confront imperial Japan and Nazi and Fascist Europe.

I was here on another morning such as that, another clear day when the planes came down and the holocaust of September 11, as December 7, galvanized a Nation. Let us learn from the Greatest Generation that saw the horror of our enemies at Pearl Harbor. Let us allow September 11 to galvanize our resolve in the war on terror. Complete the mission as our President has challenged our Nation to do.

NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, last week an 80-foot spruce tree was delivered to the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol building. Originally billed as the Capitol Holiday Tree, this beautiful spruce has been officially changed back to its historical name, the Capitol Christmas Tree, by the Speaker of the House, in time for the lighting ceremony to be held this Thursday. Predictably, the Speaker's move was unwelcome to the adherents of political correctness who constantly demand "mainstream policy" from our leaders.

So what is the mainstream on this issue, Mr. Speaker? A poll conducted last week provides some revealing numbers. Eighty-one percent of those polled expressed opposition to religion being excluded from public life. Eighty-three percent think nativity scenes should be allowed on public property. Ninety-three percent think the phrase "In God We Trust" should remain on our currency.

We would do well to keep these numbers in mind the next time the left wing attempts to arbitrarily define the mainstream for everyone. And I applaud the Speaker for taking a commonsense stand in calling our Capitol Christmas Tree what it is.